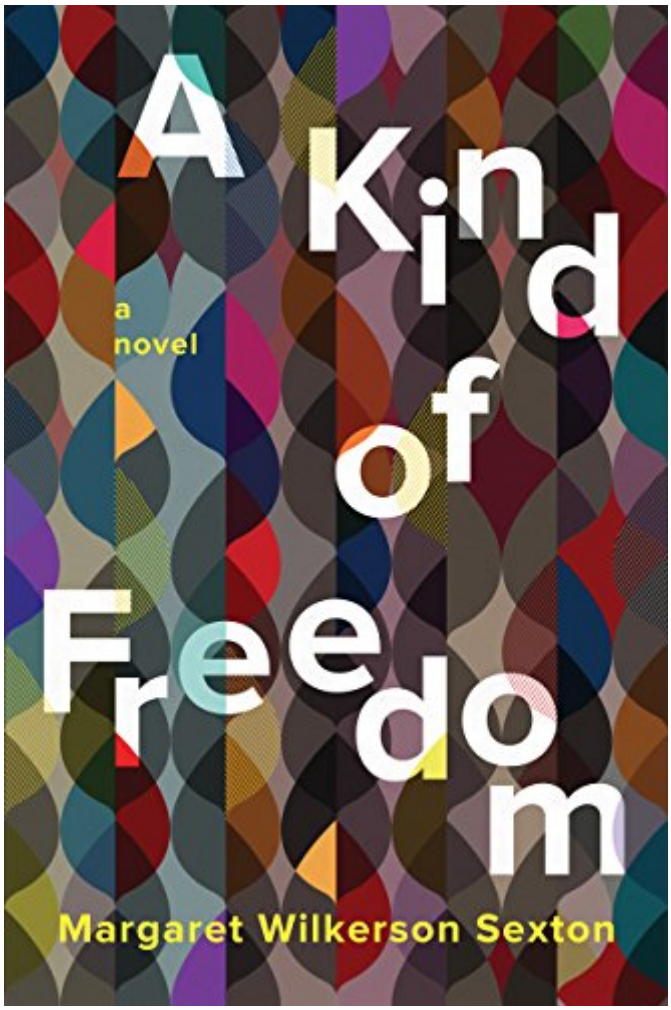
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A Kind Of Freedom: A Novel



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Synopsis

An ABA Summer/Fall 2017 Indies Introduce SelectionA SIBA Summer 2017 Okra Pick"... [T]his emotionally wrenching, character-rich debut spans three generations in a city deeply impacted by segregation, economic inequality, and racial tensions... SextonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s narrative navigates complex topics with an adroit sensitivity that lends sympathy to each characterÃ¢â ¬â„¢s realistic, if occasionally self-destructive, motivations. Being able to capture 70 years of New Orleans history and the emotional changes in one family in such a short book is a testament to SextonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s powers of descriptive restraint. In this fine debut, each generation comes with new possibilities and deferred dreams blossoming with the hope that this time, finally, those dreams may come to fruition." Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers Weekly, starred reviewEvelyn is a Creole woman who comes of age in New Orleans at the height of World War II. Her family inhabits the upper echelon of Black society, and when she falls for no-account Renard, she is forced to choose between her life of privilege and the man she loves.In 1982, EvelynÃ¢â ¬â„¢s daughter, Jackie, is a frazzled single mother grappling with her absent husbandÃ¢â ¬â„¢s drug addiction. Just as she comes to terms with his abandoning the family, he returns, ready to resume their old life.JackieÃ¢â ¬â„¢s son, T.C., loves the creative process of growing marijuana more than the weed itself. He was a square before Hurricane Katrina, but the New Orleans he knew didn’t survive the storm. Fresh out of a four-month stint for drug charges, T.C. decides to start overÃ¢â ¬â •until an old friend convinces him to stake his new beginning on one last deal.For Evelyn, Jim Crow is an ongoing reality, and in its wake new threats spring up to haunt her descendants. A Kind of Freedom is an urgent novel that explores the legacy of racial disparity in the South through a poignant and redemptive family history.

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Customer Reviews

I noticed in one of the many blurbs written for this book that "The Conversation" says this is "A future literary classic" and I couldn't agree more. "A Kind of Freedom" was everything I needed and more from a story.This book starts out in 1944 WWII New Orleans centered on Evelyn who is a member of an upper-middle class Creole family. She ends up falling for an "uneven [African American] man" named Renard and from there we get to the family saga aspect.The other 2 eras that get featured are 1986 crack era New Orleans centered on Jackie who is Evelyn and Renard's youngest daughter and 2010 Post-Katrina New Orleans that is centered on T.C., the only son of Jackie and her husband Terry.There really is so much to take in from this novel. My biggest takeaway was the cast of characters. Sexton did such a good job at building complex characters. Across the board. Any character that had a name, for the most part at least, wasn't flat. You will remember not only the key aforementioned figures, but also Ruby, Sybil, and Terry. You will see characters that strive for and even live their best life against the insurmountable odds that the United States stacked against them. You will also see some of these aforementioned names self-destruct in front of these odds. None of the success of failure is contrived either. It all read and more importantly FELT real. This is one of the first books I read where I wasn't invested only in the protagonists, I wanted EVERYONE to win and that speaks to the power of Sexton.The setting was authentic and enlightening. It feels like you creep down the socioeconomic ladder as time progresses and you even see the style and structure of the writing somewhat reflect that.Speaking of structure, it was genius. It wasn't your typical saga where the first third is 1944, second 1986, and third 2010. No, Sexton had us in Post-Katrina New Orleans roughly 60 pages in. This was a brilliant way to construct this novel because she was able to begin and end in the WWII New Orleans. Almost as if what we read prior to the ending was speculative fiction, as if she continued writing the outcomes for these lovable characters may have been different. The optimism that concludes this novel was that convincing.

I really recommend "A Kind of Freedom." It is a poignant and well-crafted story that I just couldn't put down. We need more voices like Margaret Wilkerson Sexton.

Wilkerson Sexton's debut novel follows three generations of a New Orleans family from the depths of 1940s Jim Crow up through the ravages of Katrina and the War on Drugs. Despite being only 250 pages long, the novel has massive range and Wilkerson Sexton weaves amongst the three story lines effortlessly, giving us depth and connection in short vignettes. The narrative arc is heartbreaking and riveting, and the depiction of New Orleans is nuanced and almost as interesting as the characters' evolution.The novel starts us off in the thick of WWII with Evelyn falling for Renard, an orphaned, penniless student and disappointing her father, a black doctor who wants more for his daughter. Renard goes off to war to help fund his education and to try to build a space for himself in an America that seems to reluctant to claim him. This sets up the two central tensions of the novel: the private push and pull of parents and their children and the historic riptide of racism and discrimination which drags the characters back no matter how hard they strive for more.I was so so so impressed with this novel--with its scope and its specificity, with the joy and the pain contained therein. Read it! Tell your friends to read it! Push it on your friends who read only dead white dudes! In a world where the "bootstraps" narrative continues to rear its ugly head in discussions of race and inequality, it's a powerful, well-written reminder that hard work is rarely enough.

Wilkerson Sexton's debut novel is sure to be an instant classic. This story takes the reader on an adventure in New Orleans through three generations, setting the background so that you actually feel what it was like to experience everyday New Orleans in the Jim Crow South, the Eighties, and Post-Katrina. As rich as the background is, the writing allows the reader to effortlessly envision the most minute details about the characters, while offering the complexity for the readers to place their own selves into the emotions and suspense that the characters face as their story unfolds. If you love great writing and great character development, this book is a must read. It will be for years to come.

The end of slavery meant freedom, but not entirely. Life in 1944 New Orleans is far from ideal for this despite their privileged beginnings as the only Creole physician in the Seventh Ward. Nelson and his wife only want the best for their two daughters, but life doesn't always run the track we want

it to. Shifting between 1944, 1986 and 2010, the course of the family is charted through three succeeding generations, and becomes richer with each invocation until when the final page is turned, set back to 1944, there is a lingering heartache in the knowledge of what the future holds for these people. In that it reminded me of Harold Pinter's play Betrayal - told in reverse, it became more poignant. I also liked the fact that New Orleans is not sentimentalized but used as a backdrop for real life.

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